DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 621 TM 800 415

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TITLE The Functional Literacy Test: Florida's Approach to Competency Testing.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 43p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education (Boston, MA, April 8-10, 1980).
JOURNAL CIT Viewpoints in Teaching and Learning; v56 n3 p67-94 Jul 1980

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; Basic Skills; Court Litigation; Educational History; Elementary Secondary Education; Functional Literacy; Grade 3; Grade 5; Grade 8; Grade 11; *Graduation Requirements; Legal Problems; Mathematics; *Minimum Competency Testing; Reading Achievement; *State Programs; Test Bias; Testing Problems; *Testing Programs; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS Florida; Florida Basic Skills Test; Florida Educational Accountability Act 1976; Florida Functional Literacy Test; *Florida State Student Assessment Test; *Florida Statewide Assessment Program

ABSTRACT

New minimum high school graduation standards were mandated for 1978-79 graduates, by Florida's Educational Accountability Act of 1976. Requirements included mastery of basic skills, completion of minimum course credits, and satisfactory performance on functional literacy tests. The literacy test was the primary criterion for graduation. On its first administration in Fall, 1977, 92% of Florida's eleventh graders passed the communications skills tests and 64% passed the mathematics test; in 1978, these figures were 97% and 74%. In August, 1978, the State Board of Education changed the scoring procedure and renamed the tests. The Basic Skills Tests became the State Student Assessment Test, Part I (SSAT-I), and the Functional Literacy Test became the SSAT, Part II, (SSAT-II). Because the SSAT-II appeared to violate the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment, a district court in July 1979, ordered suspension of the SSAT-II as a graduation requirement until the 1982-83 school year. There were charges that the test was racially and culturally biased, and that pre-test copies of test questions had been made available to students. However, Florida has continued its assessment program (without affecting graduation), as well as subsequent remediation in mathematics, reading, and writing. (Author/GDC)

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The Functional Literacy Test: Florida's Approach to Competency Testing

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A Paper Presented
in a Symposium entitled
Minimum Competency Testing Today
at the
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON MEASUREMENT IN EDUCATION
AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
1980 Annual Meeting

Boston, Massachusetts April 7-11, 1980

TM 800415

Table of Contents

Abstract 1

Historical Development 2

1976 Educational Accountability Act 4

Basic Skills Tests and the Functional Literacy Test 7

Minimum Performance Standards for Grades 3, 5, 8 & 11. . . 9
Representative Skills for Grades 3, 5, 8 & 11 11
The Functional Literacy Test 13
Technical Characteristics of the Assessment Program . . . 15

Recent Decisions and Events Affecting the Basic Skills Tests and the Functional Literacy Test 18

State Board of Education Changes Scoring Procedures and Renames "The Test" 19
Test Administration and Remediation Procedures Questioned 21
Test Results in Dade County and the State 24
Commissioner's Task Force Makes Recommendations 30
Functional Literacy Test Requirement Suspended in U. S. District Court 33

Summary 38

References 39

Abstract

New minimum graduation standards were mandated for 1978-79 graduates by Florida's 1976 Educational Accountability Act. Requirements included mastery of basic skills, completion of a minimum number of course credits, and satisfactory performance on functional literacy tests. The latter standard, measured by "The Test," was earmarked as the primary criteria for graduation. "The Test" measured 11 skills in communications and 13 in math. Results of the first implementation in Fall, 1977 indicated that 92% of Florida's eleventh grade students were successful on the communications skills and 64% passed the mathematics portion as compared to 1978's respective success ratios of 97% and 74%. In August, 1978 the Cabinet (State Board of Education) changed the scoring procedures and renamed the Basic Skills Tests the State Student Assessment Test, Part I (SSAT-I) and the Functional Literacy Test the State Student Assessment Test, Part II (SSAT-II). On July 12, 1979, U. S. District Judge George C. Carr ordered the state to suspend the use of the SSAT-II as a graduation requirement until the 1982-83 school year due to violation of the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. However, Florida has continued the assessment program and subsequent remediation in mathematics and communications (reading and writing).

The Functional Literacy Test: Florida's Approach to Competency Testing

Historical Development

The state of Florida has been committed to educational accountability since late in the 1960's. This commitment evolved formally in 1968 when a law was passed instructing the Commissioner of Education to expand the State Department of Education's (SDE) capability for constructive educational change and services necessary to achieve greater quality in education. The Commissioner was further instructed to use all appropriate management tools, techniques, and practices which would cause the state's educational programs to be more effective and which would provide the greatest economies in the management and operation of the state's system of operation (Department of Education, 1976).

In fulfilling these instructions, the Commissioner recommended several pieces of legislation in subsequent years. He also defined the state's major role in education by outling nine principles which were adopted by the Florida State Board of Education (SBE) in August,1969. Six of these principles are: the establishment of state educational objectives in priority order, provision of sound financial support, creation of minimum standards for achievement and quality controls, assistance to districts for evaluating results, creation of an information system, and efficient use of funds.

The 1970 Florida Legislature mandated the Commissioner, in accord with his recommendation, to develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs. More specifically, the plan was to be designed to objectively assess educational programs offered by public schools and to develop necessary methods to assess progress of students at various grade levels.

In 1971, three important developments took place as a result or extension of these recommendations and mandates. First, the SBE adopted the seven primary goals of education which were developed by the SDE. These goals, which were revised in 1975, basically include: mastery of basic skills; maintenance of mental and physical health; appreciation of the family; moral, ethical, and spiritual values; responsible citizenship; occupational interests; and aesthetic and cultural appreciation of human achievements in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts. Second, the 1971 Legislature created the Florida Statewide Assessment Program; and third, the SDE contracted with various Florida universities to obtain comprehensive listings of specific behavioral objectives for most subject areas ranging from mathematics to art to automotive engineering. These events essentially concluded the 1968-1971 era or the origin of the Statewide Assessment Program.

During the second phase, 1971-1973, Florida's first and second developmental assessment programs were implemented. The first assessment was conducted, within one year after the initial 1971 Educational Accountability Act, through a contract with the Center for the Study of Education at the University of California in Los Angeles. Florida's second statewide assessment, in 1972-73, involved in-state educators and Florida State University in the development of items. Items' content validity and determination of the appropriate grade levels being assessed were contracted out to a commercial testing firm, Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich.

The third phase, 1973-1975, included the third and fourth statewide assessments. The third assessment, in 1973, had all students in grades 3,6, and 9 eligible to take the test except the educable mentally retarded (EMR), trainable mentally retarded (TMR), and the blind.

The fourth assessment, 1974-75, involved a contract with the Westirghouse Learning Corporation for developmental assistance. This contract stipulated that a field test be made of test items and administration materials. The information obtained was valuable in making final adjustments to the assessment instruments. This assessment was unique in that all students, except the EMR, TMR, and blind students, in grades 3,6, and 9 were assessed in reading, writing, and mathematics. It marked the first time that a random sample was not selected. Other important occurrences during this third phase included the establishment of a policy review committee composed of coordinators of accountability in each district, the 1974 revision of the 1971 Educational Accountability Act, and special assessments. The special assessments included a comparison of Florida's achievement relative to the nation and the development of the Catalog of Behavioral Objectives for Trainable Mentally Retarded Students (1974) which ultimately resulted in the 1975-76 assessment of TMR students.

The fourth phase, 1975-1977, included the fifth statewide assessment, the Anchor Test Study conducted by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), completion of the TMR assessment model, and assessment of the visually handicapped. All of these efforts culminated in Florida's 1976 Educational Accountability Act and development and implementation of a competency based functional literacy test known as "The Test."

1976 Educational Accountability Act

The 1976 Educational Accountability Act mandated new minimum graduation standards for students in the 1978-79 graduating class. Requirements included mastery of basic skills, completion of a minimum number of course credits, and satisfactory performance on functional literacy tests. The latter standard was earmarked as the primary criteria for graduation.

The Educational Accountability Act of 1976 (CHAPTER 76-223) was written based on the following intent of the Legislature:

> (a) Provide a system of accountability for education in Florida which guarantees that each student is afforded similar opportunities for educational advancement without regard to geographic differences and varying local economic factors.
> (b) Provide information for education decision-makers at the state, district, and school levels so that resources may be appropriately allocated and the needs of the system of public education met in a timely manner.
> (c) Provide information about costs of educational programs and the differential effectiveness of differing instructional programs so that the educational process may be improved continually.
> (d) Guarantee to each student in the Florida system of public education that the system provides instructional programs which meet minimum performance standards compatible with the state's plan for education.
> (e) Provide a more thorough analysis of program costs and the degree to which the various districts are meeting the minimum performance standards established by the State Board of Education.
> (f) Provide information to the public about the performance of the Florida system of public education in meeting established goals and providing effective, meaningful, and relevant educational experiences designed to give students at least the minimum skills necessary to function and survive in today's society. (Department of Education, 1977,p.3)

The section of the 1976 Educational Accountability Law (Section 6. Section 229.57, Florida Statutes) pertaining to student assessment testing programs states:

> (1) STATEWIDE TESTING. -- The primary purpose of the statewide testing program is to provide information needed for state-level decisions. The program shall be designed to:
> (a) Assist in the identification of educational needs at the state, district, and school levels.
> (b) Assess how well districts and schools are meeting state goals and minimum performance standards.
> (c) Provide information to aid in the development of policy issues and concerns.
> (d) Provide a basis for comparisons among districts and between districts, the state, and the nation, where appropriate.
> (e) Produce data which can be used to aid in the identification of exceptional educational programs or processes.

(2) THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM. -- The commissioner is directed to implement a program of statewide assessment testing which shall provide for the improvement of the operation and management of the public schools. The statewide program shall be timed, as far as possible, so as not to conflict with on-going district assessment programs. As part of the program the commissioner shall:

(a) Establish, with the approval of the state board, minimum performance standards related to the goals for education contained in the state's plan including, but not limited to, basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The minimum performance standards shall be approved by April 1 in each year they are established, for a period of no less than 3 nor more than 5 years.

(b) Develop and administer in the public schools a uniform, statewide program of assessment to determine, periodically, educational status and progress, and the degree of achievement of approved minimum performance standards. The uniform statewide program shall consist of testing in grades 3,5, 8, and 11 and may include the testing of additional grades and skill areas as specified by the commissioner.

(c) Develop and administer, as needed in the public schools, a uniform, statewide program of assessment of special programs as defined in s. 236.081 (1) (c).

(d) Monitor the results of the assessment program and, at any time the composite student performance of a school or basic program is found to be below the established minimum standards, notify the district superintendent, the school principal and the school advisory committee or other existing parent group of this situation within 30 days of its determination. The commissioner shall further provide technical assistance to the district in the identification of the causes of this deficiency and shall recommend courses of action for its correction.

(e) Provide technical assistance to the school districts, when requested, in the development of student performance standards in addition to the established minimum statewide standards.

(3) DISTRICT ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS. -- Each district shall periodically assess student performance and achievement in each school. Such assessment programs shall be based upon local goals and objectives which are compatible with the state's plan for education and which supplement the minimum performance standards approved by the State Board of Education. Data from district assessment programs shall be provided to the commissioner when such data are required in order to evaluate specific instructional programs or processes or when the data is needed for other research or evaluation projects. Each district may provide for other research or evaluation projects. Each district may provide acceptable, compatible district assessment data to substitute for any assessment data needed at the state level when the commissioner certifies that such data is acceptable for the purposes of this section. (Department of Education, 1977, pp.8-9)

Mandates regarding promotion and graduation of students in Florida's public schools were presented in the pupil progression section (Section 15. Section 232. 245, Florida Statutes) of the 1976 Educational Accountability Act. Section 15 stated:

> (1) By July 1, 1977, each district school board shall establish a comprehensive program for pupil progression which shall be based upon an evaluation of each pupil's performance, including how well he masters the minimum performance standards approved by the state board.
> (2) The district program for pupil progression shall be based upon local goals and objectives which are compatible with the state's plan for education and which supplement the minimum performance standards approved by the State Board of Education. Particular emphasis, however, shall be placed upon the pupil's mastery of the basic skills, especially reading, before he is promoted from the third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades. Other pertinent factors considered by the teacher before recommending that a pupil progress from one grade to another shall be prescribed by the district school board in its rules.
> (3) Beginning with the 1978-79 school year, each district school board shall establish standards for graduation from its secondary schools. Such standards shall include, but not be limited to, mastery of the basic skills and satisfactory performance in functional literacy as determined by the State Board of Education, and the completion of the minimum number of credits required by the district school board. Each district shall develop procedures for the remediation of those students who are unable to meet such standards. Based on these standards each district shall provide for the awarding of certificates of attendance and may provide for differentiated diplomas to correspond with the varying achievement levels or competencies of its secondary students. (Department of Education, 1977, p.15)

Basic Skills Tests and the Functional Literacy Test

The major outcomes of the recommendations and legislative mandate, as stated in the 1976 Educational Accountability Act, were the development of the Basic Skills Test and the Functional Literacy Test. In fulfilling the legislative mandate, the Statewide Assessment Program developed and administered Basic Skills Tests to all Florida students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, as well as the Functional Literacy Test to eleventh grade

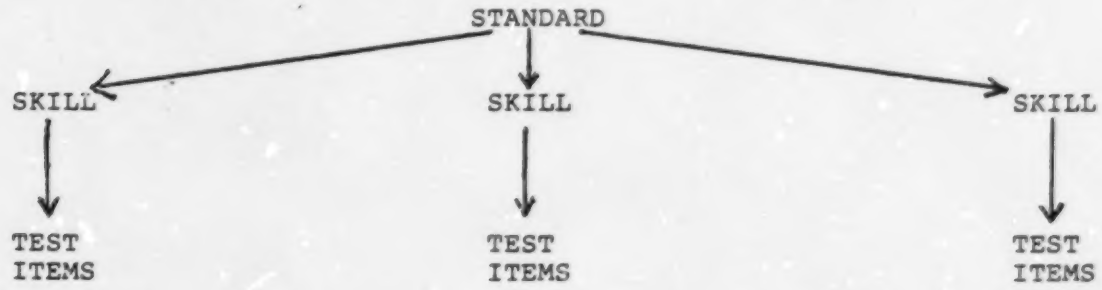
students in October, 1977. This test administration involved approximately 460,000 students. The Basic Skills Test measured appropriate skills agreed upon by educators as minimal for the grade level tested. Functional literacy was defined by Florida's SDE as the ability to apply the basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics to problems and tasks of a practical nature or to problems encountered in everyday life.

Florida's Assessment Program has focused on providing meaningful data concerning student achievement on these tests to educators, legislators, parents, citizens, and students. To accomplish this end, the Assessment Program provides student achievement information concerning the attainment of the newly adopted state minimal standards and skills. Dissemination of this information is in the form of individual student reports, classroom and school reports to teachers and principals, and numerous reports to districts. In addition, comprehensive annual documents, presenting skill-by-skill achievement results at the district and state level, are distributed.

The Florida SBE adopted a set of minimum student performance standards in April, 1977. These standards were developed by the SDE with involvement of many local school district educators from across the state. The standards reflect desired minimum achievement for each student at each grade level. "Minimal milestone objectives" that were used for development of the 1976-77 assessment items were replaced by the new performance standards. The 1976-77 "milestone objectives" and the 1977-78 "standards" are very similar; "objectives" from which the 1976-77 items were built are now referred to as "skills."

There are "skills" related to each minimum performance standard. Each skill, in turn, is measured by several test items, usually four

or five. Following is a diagram of the relationship of skills to a standard and items to a skill.



Students "master" a skill when they correctly answer at least 70% of the items. For the 1977-78 tests, skills were mastered according to the following guidelines.

Number of Items	Criterion
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	3 out of 4
5	4 out of 5
6	5 out of 6
7	5 out of 7
8	6 out of 8
9	7 out of 9
10	7 out of 10
Etc.	(Selected to be at least 70%)

These criteria were selected to maximize the accuracy of classifying a student as a "master" of a skill. Mastery of a standard is defined as the attainment of (1) at least 70% of the items which comprise the standard and (2) successful attainment of at least half of the skills which comprise the standard. (See pp. 19-20 for scoring modifications).

Minimum Performance Standards for Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11

The following lists represent all of the reading, writing and mathematics standards:

READING STANDARDS

A. Acquire a basic vocabulary.
B. Determine word meaning from usage in passage.
C. Determine word meaning from word parts.
D. Determine if selections have similar meanings.
E. Determine the main idea of a message.
F. Find information in a message.
G. Determine cause and effect of event or action.
H. Determine the generalization supported by a message.
I. Identify fantasy, fact, and opinion.
J. Recognize irrelevant and invalid statements.
K. Follow oral and written directions.
L. Identify sources for needed information.
M. Use appropriate reference skills.

WRITING STANDARDS

A. Compose grammatically correct sentences.
B. Organize information.
C. Write a paragraph expressing ideas clearly.
D. Supply necessary information.
E. Write letters using accepted formats.
F. Fill out common forms.
G. Spell correctly.
H. Punctuate correctly.
I. Capitalize correctly.
J. Write legibly.

MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

A. Count quantities.
B. Read and write numerals.
C. Round Numbers.
D. Put numbers in order.
E. Identify equivalent fractions, decimals, & percents.
F. Add whole numbers.
G. Subtract whole numbers.
H. Multiply whole numbers.
I. Divide whole numbers.
J. Add and subtract fractions.
K. Multiply fractions.
L. Add and subtract decimals.
M. Multiply and divide decimals.
N. Find percentages.
O. Measure time, temp, distance, capacity, & weight.
P. Identify geometric figures and shapes.
Q. Identify the value of coins and bills.
R. Determine the information needed to solve a problem.
S. Estimate solutions by rounding.
T. Solve problems-whole numbers.
U. Solve problems-fractions, decimals, & percents.
V. Solve money problems.
W. Solve measurement problems (metric & customary).
X. Interpret graphs, tables, and maps.

(Department of Education- 1978a, pp.29-30)

Representative Skills for Grades 3, 5, 8, and 11

The following is an example of skills and the number of items which represent the minimum performance standards on fractions from the previously listed mathematics standards. These skills were included on the Basic Skills Tests for the designated grade levels.

Grade 3 - Mathematics (Fractions)

None Applicable

Grade 5 - Mathematics (Fractions)

Standard	Skill	Criteria for Achievement of Skill (Items)
J.	19. Add two fractions with like denominators	4/5
J.	20. Subtract two fractions with like denominators	4/5

Grade 8 - Mathematics (Fractions)

Standard	Skill	Criteria for Achievement of Skill (Items)
J.	18. Add two proper fractions with unlike denominators	4/5
J.	19. Subtract two proper fractions with unlike denominators	4/5
K.	20. Multiply two proper and/or improper fractions	4/5

Grade 11 - Mathematics (Fractions)

Standard	Skill	Criteria for Achievement of Skill (Items)
J.	9. Add two mixed numbers	4/5
J.	10. Subtract a whole number and a mixed number	4/5
J.	11. Subtract two mixed numbers	4/5

The Basic Skills Tests included the following component areas which were represented by minimum performance standards, skills, and items.

Mathematics

Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Number Concepts	Number Concepts	Number Concepts	Number Concepts
Computation	Computation	Computation	Computation
Practical Problems	Fractions	Fractions	Fractions
	Measurement	Decimals	Decimals
	Practical Problems	Measurement	
		Practical Problems	

Reading

Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Vocabulary	Vocabulary	Vocabulary	Vocabulary
Reading Comprehension	Reading Comprehension	Reading Comprehension	Reading Comprehension
Logical Thinking	Logical Thinking	Logical Thinking	Logical Thinking
Study Skills	Study Skills	Study Skills	Study Skills

Writing

Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Organization	Organization	Grammar & Sentence Composition	Sentence Composition
Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization	Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization.	Suppling Information	Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization
		Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalization.	

The Basic Skills Tests used in grades three and five were similar to the tests used in 1976; however, they were revised to match the minimum performance standards and to provide more items per skill. The third grade test covered 29 skills with 146 items. And the fifth grade test had 234 items covering 46 skills. The eighth grade test was entirely new, although it was extensively field tested and revised, and

it had 54 skills covered by 272 items. The grade eleven assessment consisted of a basic skills test with 32 skills and 166 items, and a functional literacy test with 24 skills and 117 items. In addition, selected schools were required to administer brief experimental tests in grades 3, 5, and 8 in order to validate new items for the overall item pool.

The Functional Literacy Test

The 1977-78 Grade 11 Functional Literacy Test covered 24 skills, including 11 in communications and 13 in Math. All 117 items represented the practical application of certain academic skills. The primary difference between the Basic Skills Test and the Functional Literacy Test was in the way the questions were stated. Questions on the Functional Literacy Test were developed from real world situations and problems while the basic skills items were standard academic exercises.

The Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey provided services as an outside contractor and assisted the Florida State Assessment Program in drafting test items. The test was extensively pretested and revised where necessary before being administered in October,1977. Thorough test security measures were instituted due to the fact that passing the test was a legislated mandate for graduation. Sealed test booklets arrived in sealed packages and each school had to return its supply of booklets for destruction.

Skills covered by the Functional Literacy Test included the following 11 in communications and 13 in mathematics:

Communication Skills - Reading

11. Determine the main idea inferred from a selection.
12. Find the who, what, where, which, and how information in a selection.
16. Determine the cause and effect of an action.

Communication Skills - Reading (cont'd)

20. Distinguish between facts and opinions.
21. Identify an unstated opinion.
26. Identify the appropriate source from which to obtain extensive information on a topic.
28. Use an index to identify the location of information requiring the use of cross-reference.
29. Use highway and city maps.

Communications Skills - Writing

32. Include the necessary information when writing letters to supply or request information.
33. Complete a check and its stub accurately.
34. Accurately complete forms used to apply for a driver's license, employment, entrance to a school or training program, insurance, and credit.

Mathematics

17. Determine the elapsed time between two events, stated in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, or years.
24. Determine equivalent amounts of up to $100, using coins and paper currency.
30. Determine the solution to real-world problems involving one or two distinct whole-number operations.
32. Determine the solution to real-world problems involving decimal fractions or percents and one or two distinct operations.
33. Determine the solution to real-world problems involving comparison shopping.
34. Determine the solution to real-world problems involving the rate of interest and the estimation of the amount of simple interest.
35. Determine the solution to real-world problems involving purchases and a rate of sales tax.
36. Determine the solution to real-world problems involving purchases and a rate of discount given in fraction or percent form.
37. Solve a problem related to length, width, or height, using metric or customary units up to kilometers and miles, conversion within the system.
38. Solve a problem involving the area of a rectangular region, using metric or customary units.
39. Solve a problem involving capacity, using units given in a table (milliliters, liters, teaspoons, cups, pints, quarts, gallons), conversion within the system.
40. Solve a problem involving weight, using units given in a table (milligrams, grams, kilograms, metric tons, ounces, pounds, tons), conversion within the system.
41. Read and determine relationships described by line graphs, circle graphs, and tables.

(Department of Education- 1978b, pp.19-20)

An example of the difference between a typical basic skills item and a related functional item is:

Basic Skill	Functional Literacy
15.00 x .04	Florida's sales tax rate is 4%. How much tax would you have to pay on a purchase of $15.00?

Technical Characteristics of the Assessment Program

Two reports have been published by the Student Assessment Section of the Department of Education which deal with aspects of reliability and validity of the Functional Literacy Test (SSAT-II). The first report entitled Construct Validity of the Florida Functional Literacy Test by Hills and King (1978) provided some support for the belief that scores on the test do relate to success in life. In the study, the 1977 test was administered to a group of citizens whose socioeconomic status was known. Citizens with a higher socioeconomic status tended to score higher on both parts of the test than those with low status. Results of the study were:

ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER OF ADULTS	PERCENTAGE PASSED	
		MATH	COMMUNICATIONS
$5,000 income and low education	40	5	30
$5 to $14,000 income and middle education	75	35	72
$14,000 and up income and high education	70	77	87

In regards to this study, the Florida Task Force on Educational Assessment Programs (1979) stated:

> If one assumes that socioeconomic status is a valid standard for measuring success in life, these results suggest that test performance is generally related to success.
>
> A second implication of the Hills-King study is not so encouraging ... large numbers of apparently successful individuals failed to pass the mathematics part of the test. This suggests that the mathematics test, as presently scored, is too difficult to be considered as a measure of minimum competency. (p. 7)

Hills and King (1978) reported that the SSAT-II had well established content validity. They determined its reliability through coefficient alpha, a measure of internal consistency, to be .96 on the mathematics portion and .98 on the communications section. Additionally, they reported a substantial correlation (.64) between the communications total score and an independent measure of reading ability known as the Cloze Test.

Chapter 2 of the second report entitled Technical Report on the Florida Statewide Assessment Program, 1978-1979 discussed psychometric or technical characteristics of the tests used in the 1978-79 Statewide Assessment Program. It specifically dealt with test validity, test reliability, and the discrimination power of the items comprising each test. This report was prepared by the Assessment Department of Westinghouse DataScore Systems under the supervision of the Student Assessment Section of Florida's Department of Education.

This document focused on content validity as being one of the most critical aspects of the criterion-referenced SSAT-II.

> The content validity of the 1978-79 Assessment Tests is assured as a result of (1) the concise item specifications

> which guided item writers, (2) the iterative mechanism of teacher and curriculum specialist review of the test items and the skills and standards they were designed to measure, and (3) the extensive involvement of citizens and educators in the articulation of the minimal performance standards measured by the items. As stated previously, other types of validity, e.g., construct and predictive, are less relevant in evaluating the criterion-referenced tests used in the Statewide Assessment Program. (p.14)

Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) was used to determine the homogeneity of the test items. These indices were .906 and .921 respectively on the communications and mathematics portions of the SSAT-II. The Brennan and Kane (B-K) index of dependability was used to determine the dependability of scores in classifying students at masters or nonmasters of the minimal performance standards. The indices of dependability were .987 on the communication skills and .926 on the mathematics tests.

In the section on item discrimination between high and low achievers, most corrected point-biserial coefficients on the SSAT-II ranged between the intervals .20-.29 and .50-.59 (correlation between the item score and the total score for the other items measuring the standard or the subject area). Eighty-three percent of the phi coefficients of correlation ranged between the intervals .40-.49 and .60-.69 (correlation between the item score [1-correct, 0-incorrect] and the score for the standard [1-mastery, 0-nonmastery]). These low coefficients were linked to the inappropriateness of using these procedures with criterion-referenced tests when they were essentially developed to be used with norm-referenced measures.

> Reasons for low coefficients include restricted range of scores (i.e., little variability) as well as, in this case, relatively easy items.
>
> One might also take the position that as long as an item discriminates positively (as did all Florida assessment items), the item is making some contribution to valid measurement of students' competencies with respect to the minimal performance

standards. In this respect the expectation that correlated coefficients should be in the middle of .80 range or higher may not be appropriate in the criterion-referenced testing situations. (p.22)

Recent Decisions and Events Affecting the Basic Skills Tests and the Functional Literacy Test

Many interesting events regarding the Basic Skills Tests and the Functional Literacy Test occurred between July, 1978 and April, 1980. Many of the reported events occurred in Dade County; however, it is suspected by Dade County Public School officials that similar happenings also occurred in other parts of the state.

The fact that a large number of students failed the test, and especially the disproportionate number of black students in that category, created an immediate storm of controversy. Charges were made that the test was culturally biased, that the scoring standards were improper, and that the administration of the test by the State was illegal. The controversy led to lawsuits, and public debate of the pros and cons of the minimum competency testing program was spirited.

In August of 1978, the Florida Cabinet, sitting as the State Board of Education, heard testimony from numerous citizens on several issues related to the minimum competency testing program. The session stretched to nine hours and culminated in a decision to continue the testing program during the 1978-79 school year. The Cabinet also decided to rename the test and to make minor changes in the scoring system. In addition, the Board directed Commissioner of Education Ralph Turlington to appoint a Task Force

on Educational Assessment Programs to study the minimum competency testing program and especially the Functional Literacy Test. The Task Force was to report its findings and recommendations to the newly constituted Board of Education in early 1979.

A more significant event was simultaneously occurring. A suit claiming that Florida's student assessment test is racially biased went to trial in Federal court in Tampa on April 30, 1979. This court case resulted in a 4-year suspension (until the 1982-83 school year) of using the test as a graduation requirement.

State Board of Education Changes Scoring Procedures and Renames "The Test"

The Miami Herald reported on August 10, 1978, that Education Commissioner Ralph Turlington was considering changing the pass-fail standards of the Functional Literacy Test that was going before the Cabinet. The scoring problem centered on having to correctly answer at least 70% of the items on each standard. A student would have to get all of the items correct on a standard with three or less items. Turlington called the Functional Literacy Test, given to 116,000 eleventh graders last October, "the most important thing we've done to improve public education in Florida". Turlington said, "The Cabinet has 'no real option'...If we are to obey the law, we must give a test and if we give a test, then it is inherent that we score it."

On August 14, 1978, an editorial in The Miami Herald stated:

> The encouraging feature of this litigation is that all sides [Cabinet and SDE] seem to have the same goal: to see to it that no child is treated unfairly. Arbitrary test requirements would be unfair. But the ultimate unfairness is to allow pupils to graduate from high school without the basic skills they'll need to function as productive citizens.

The Miami Herald reported on August 16, 1973, that "Governor Reubin Askew and the Cabinet Tuesday changed the name of the Functional Literacy Test so youngsters failing it won't be called illiterates and adopted a new scoring system." The Basic Skills Test was renamed the "State Student Assessment Test, Part I" and the Functional Literacy Test was retitled the "State Student Assessment Test, Part II." The Cabinet eliminated a requirement that students pass at least 50% of the skills, or subsections of the test, as well as 70% of the total questions. Commissioner of Education Ralph Turlington warned youths against "getting their hopes up." He said, "It simplifies the scoring, but I do not think it materially alters the standards on the test...It is 'extremely remote' that a student who failed the test will pass it under the new scoring system." Another change required the SDE to include at least four questions in every section of Parts I and II of the State Student Assessment Test and to rescore those sections of last October's eleventh grade Basic Skills Test (Part I) with less than four questions. Previously, students had to get a 100% correct score on sections with three or less questions. The new scoring procedures will require one out of two, or two out of three.

"The change will have 'no effect whatsoever' on the functional literacy test [Part II] because no section had less than four questions, said Dr. Carey Ferrell, SDE director of public schools. It will have 'only a minimal impact' on the eleventh grade basic skills test [Part I]." Bob Williams, director of Florida Legal Services, said, "IT'S REALLY just tinkering, although they did start

to get at one of the problems, the number of test questions." Jack McLean, Director of Legal Services of North Florida, said, "The whole issue of validity and reliability of the tests has been ignored and that's the overriding issue." On August 17, an editorial in The Miami Herald stated:

> A rose by any other name is still a rose, and a functional literacy test by any other name still measures functional literacy. As long as it does that, the semantic nicety of calling it something else really doesn't matter.... The Cabinet changed the label but not the content - and that is the most important factor.... If a full, fair, and non-political hearing produces firm evidence that the test discriminates against blacks, then it should be amended.... The 11th-grade test is the Legislature's acknowledgement that past policies of "social promotion," sending students to the next grade regardless of their state of competency, is the ultimate unfairness. It is never easy to institute standards where none existed before.

Test Administration and Remediation Procedures Questioned

On Friday, July 28, 1978, it was reported that a teacher at Miami Northwestern High School had given 1200 students an exam that state officials say was a near-replica of the Functional Literacy Test. State officials were quite concerned since many items were almost identical except for changing some numbers. The reason for the concern was that the State Assessment Program was only changing about 35% of the questions on the 1978-79 version of the test. On July 29, 1978, The Miami Herald reported that Paul Hirko denied that his test, the "Mighty Bulls Brain Buster," was a replica of the state's test. Dr. Thomas Fisher, Director of the State Assessment Program, was glad the Herald discovered the "Brain Buster" and he wanted school officials to know that copying of the literacy test would not be tolerated.

On February 15, 1979, this author attempted to acquire a copy of the "Mighty Bulls Brain Buster." However, this assessment instrument was no longer in existence according to its reported developer, Mr. Paul Hirko. Although the test was no longer available, Mr. Hirko gave some of his opinions and beliefs about the overall testing program, when asked to do so. Essentially, he said:

1. My only concern is that the best possible alternatives are taken to help the children. (Mr. Hirko teaches mathematics at Northwestern High School, which was ranked nearly last in Dade County for overall performance on October's test (see page 27).
2. The total assessment program is an idea with a great deal of value.
3. Not enough support has been provided to teachers in the form of inservice training and preparatory instructional materials. (One packet of support materials was issued after the initial testing in October, 1977.)
4. The second testing of this year's juniors (in April, 1979) will probably reduce Northwestern's failure rate from 50% to 25% on the mathematics skills.
5. Last year's juniors only had three attempts to pass the test. This year's juniors and future classes will have four attempts to pass the test prior to completing their senior year.
6. Students' attitudes toward education have been drastically affected. Generally, students failing the test on the first or second trial have begun taking their homework much more seriously, they tend to be more punctual, and their classroom behavior has improved. In a couple of isolated cases, the opposite has been true.
7. Ideally, the testing program should have been implemented in a fashion which would not have jeopardized the juniors' potential graduation in the initial year of utilization. Last year's seniors could have been tested on a research basis in order to collect valuable data. This data could have then been used effectively to implement the program with this year's juniors.

Mr. Hirko gave similar responses to the Commissioner's Task Force on Educational Assessment Programs.

The Miami Herald reported on October 17, 1978, that most of Miami Edison High School's 360 juniors were pleasantly surprised that they already had seen more than 60 of the 100 questions and answers of the State Student Assessment Test, Part I (previously the Basic Skills Test). This same news article stated:

> Testing officers in Tallahassee said local school officials violated an order by giving the students a "practice exercise" which contained most of the questions on the test. LOCAL SCHOOL officials said it was all a mistake. They blamed the state for sending "teacher's copies" of the test to the schools. And they raised the possibility that students in other Florida schools saw the test questions in advance too.... Florida's Commissioner of Education Ralph Turlington said even if the Edison scores are given special attention, it will be up to the school's administration to decide if their students have actually mastered the basic skills. Turlington also said he doesn't think anyone at Edison would knowingly circumvent testing procedures.

As planned, the State Student Assessment Test, Part II (formerly the Functional Literacy Test) was administered to approximately 46,000 twelfth graders and 117,000 eleventh graders on Friday, October 20, 1978. On October 21, The Miami Herald reported that the test seemed easier the second time around. A student at Miami's Edison High School exclaimed, "That test was so-o-o-o-o easy! If I didn't pass it this time, I'm really dumb."

On October 31, The Miami Herald printed a letter to the editor from Dr. John L. Jones, Dade Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Jones stated:

> There is a great deal of difference between teaching the test and teaching to the test. Dade's teachers are encouraged to make sure their students are familiar with all the types of questions that may appear on the state-mandated test, but this is not to be construed as making sure the students receive the test questions beforehand.... To encourage any measures which would negate the meaning of test results would be extremely counter productive.

The Miami Herald reported on November 1 that:

> Edison High School's juniors were not the only ones who got to see many of the questions on their student assessment tests, given on October 9 through 20, ahead of time. Students at Sunset and Southwest also practiced with at least a portion of the real thing.... The problems at the three Dade Schools "appear to be an isolated incident," Fisher said. So far "there has been no rash of phone calls reporting a problem," he said.

Test Results in Dade County and the State

The Florida Department of Education has published several documents which included statewide, county, and district testing results. These reports, such as A Guide to 1977-1978 Statewide Assessment Results and State and District Report of Results, 1977-78, viewed student achievement at three levels:

1. Percent of students achieving each standard.
2. Percent of students achieving each skill.
3. Percent of students answering each item correctly.

The Department of Education aggregated this information at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. The following figures represent the statewide percentages of eleventh grade students who passed the test in each ethnic group (where data was available) and the total percentage of students who were successful:

	Communications		Mathematics	
	1977	1978	1977	1978
Asian	85	--	70	--
American Indian-Eskimo	91	--	60	--
Black	74	89	23	40
Hispanic	93	--	61	--
White	97	99	76	83
Total Population	92	97	64	74

("Court Test May Flunk,"1978; Turlington, 1979)

When the Functional Literacy Test was administered for the second time during the 1977-78 school year, 74% of the black students and 25% of the white students retaking the test failed both sections. Forty-six percent of the black students failed the mathematics portion of the test on this second examination (retest). On the third administration of the test (retest), 60% of the remaining black students failed the mathematics section as compared to 36% of the remaining white students. After three administrations of the test, 20.049% of the black students had not passed the test as compared to 1.9% of the white students. The failure rate among black students was approximately 10 times that among white students. Approximately 5.8% of the total population of Florida's high school seniors failed to pass the test in 1978-79 (Carr, 1979).

Results of the test in October of 1978 showed that all but one of Florida's 67 school districts improved overall. Success on the test ranged from 92% in Monroe County to 54% in Madison County. Only Flagler County failed to show improvement. Commissioner Turlington said that these scores indicated something good was happening in Florida's schools and that the test proves students can learn and teachers can teach. Turlington thought that 50% of the repeating students would pass and was surprised that more than 66% of the repeaters passed. He believed that more than 90% of the state's seniors would master the 120 question test in April, 1979 to qualify for a diploma. Other state officials' opinions about the results varied.

> THERE'S NOTHING we can do about the failures, said Oscar Beck, assistant superintendent for instruction .... Fifty-six percent of (the county's) students are black, and they have traditionally scored lower than white students.... They're doing as well as they can.... Educators in Tallahassee vehemently disagree with Beck on that point. They note that Gadsden, the county with the highest percentage of black students [80% black], raised its passing rate from 31 to 58 percent this year.... That moved Gadsden out of last place and ahead of several other counties including Dixie, which is 83 percent white.
> ("Literacy Test '78'", December 17, 1978, p. 1-B)

Florida's black high school juniors performed better this year (October, 1978) on the Functional Literacy Test than last year's black juniors. The passing rate of blacks rose from 22% to 39% while white students increased from 76% to 83%. Based on these results, Commissioner Turlington said:

> Even though blacks this year failed at a rate twice that of whites, their increase of 17 percentage points compared to whites' 7-point increase shows that the testing program is not racially biased.... the overall results show that blacks can do as well as whites if students and teachers continue to work for that goal.... The gains made, especially by our black students, prove that children can learn, no matter what their racial, cultural or economic background may be.
> ("Blacks' Lit Scores Rise, But Most Still Fail," January 11, 1979, p. 22-A)

The passing rate of Florida's Latin juniors rose from 61% to 73%. Charles Cherry, president of the NAACP, said members of his organization are not pleased with the improvement in blacks' scores and continues to believe that the test is culturally biased. He added, "Mr. Turlington and his staff are trying to cover up all the mistakes they made in creating the test.... They did not go through scientific procedures necessary to make sure it is valid." State officials have defended the exam by claiming that lower scores among blacks are a result of economic status and not racial

or cultural discrimination in the test itself. A group of Tampa high school seniors have been joined by the NAACP in a class action suit, against the Department of Education, claiming the test is racially biased. Department of Education officials speculated that the class action suit would be weakened in upcoming federal court action because at least 4 of the 10 plaintiffs passed the literacy test on their second try last October ("NAACP Skeptical, Latins Delighted About Test Scores," January 12, 1979).

The following figures represent the percentage of 11th graders who passed the Functional Literacy Test in October of 1977, 1978 and 1979. Included are the percentage of students who would not have received a regular diploma at the end of the 1978-79 school year due to failing the test. The 10 schools listed include the 5 best and 5 worst performing of Dade County's 23 high schools.

	Communications			Mathematics			% of Students Who Would Not Have Graduated
SCHOOLS	77	78	79	77	78	79	in 78-79
Sunset*	NA	100	100	NA	86	88	NA
Coral Park	98	98	99	85	85	87	1.12
Palmetto	94	98	99	79	84	87	4.17
Southwest	91	99	99	71	81	81	5.22
North Miami Beach	95	97	99	69	82	86	1.65
Miami Jackson	74	92	94	22	64	54	13.95
Central	82	87	90	33	58	51	5.48
Carol City	86	91	89	38	51	44	13.79
Edison	80	88	93	26	45	54	10.34
Northwestern	78	83	92	31	50	52	16.50

*Opened in Fall, 1978

("Dade Basic Skills Scores Slip," November 30, 1979; "Dade Updates Data on Literacy Tests," May 22, 1979; "Literacy Rate Improves Dramatically," December 7, 1978).

The students at Sunset High attributed their success to their teachers and a lot of hard work. Sunset's principal, Edward Arahill, says it was not just discipline and the school's basic skills

designation that helped Sunset to top honors, but much of the success is a result of the students' affluent families. He feels that many of these families (99% of them are white) stress education and advancement. Arahill said:

> Expectations, opportunity and placing a demand for excellence on students does it. Their parents have a history of success.... But I also have the teachers who are willing to go that extra mile. They push the kids and (the teachers) push themselves.... All of these teachers want to be here. They chose to transfer here this year because of the basic skills concept.
> ("Top Scores No Shock at Sunset High," December 10, 1978, p. 31)

If the Functional Literacy Test requirement had not been suspended, 614 students would have received Certificates of Completion during the 1978-79 school year due to failure. Approximately 11,800 students would have received normal diplomas and another 200 students would have not received either a certificate or a diploma due to failing courses ("Dade Updates Data on Literacy Tests," May 22, 1979). Consequently, 4.87% of the seniors in Dade County would not have received a regular diploma even though they would have successfully completed the required courses.

Dade County high school juniors outscored their predecessors on the Functional Literacy Test for the second year in a row in October of 1979, even though the exam was no longer a threat to their diplomas. On July 12, 1979, U. S. District Court Judge George C. Carr ordered the state to wait until the 1982-83 school year before requiring students to pass the test as a graduation requirement.

Twelfth grade students taking the math portion of the exam for the second or third time did not do nearly as well as their counterparts last year. In fact, 51% of them failed the test this year

while only 29% of last year's twelfth graders failed.

Overall results on the test indicate that the following percentages of Dade County Public School students successfully completed the test in 1977, 1978, and 1979.

	COMMUNICATIONS			MATHEMATICS		
	77	78	79	77	78	79
GRADE						
11	89	96	97	58	72	76
12	NA	88	86	NA	71	49

("Literacy-Test Scores Rise for Juniors--But Seniors' Scores Fall From Last Year," November 29, 1979, p. 2-C)

Dade School Superintendent, Johnny Jones, had ordered administrators to encourage this year's students to take the test even though it may not count. Approximately half as many high school seniors (2,182) repeated the test in comparison with last year. However, 15,356 juniors completed the test, which was comparable to the number who took it last year. Dr. Jones said:

> ...the dismal showing in the senior class is "undoubtedly" related to the court decision "and the effect of that decision on the motivation of students who had previously failed."... Jones explained higher 11th grade scores by saying that students have accumulated a "test consciousness" during the past two years. He said it is possible that fewer 12th-graders took the test because--perhaps--fewer needed to retake it. "I don't know what happened with the 12th-graders, but I'm going to find out." ("Literacy-Test Scores Rise for Juniors--But Seniors' Scores Fall From Last Year," November 29, 1979, p. 2-C)

Commissioner of Education Ralth Turlington was pleased with the modest improvement on eleventh graders test scores in October of 1979.

> In fact, Turlington said, Florida students are doing so well on the examination that the test standards will be raised in October 1981 under orders from Gov. Bob Graham and the Cabinet.... He said the test standards would be raised, however, especially on the communications portion, in October 1981, a year before a federal court has ruled that state officials may require high school seniors to pass the test as a condition for obtaining a diploma. ("Early Results Say Literacy Test Scores Are Improving," November 22, 1979, p. 20-E)

Commissioner's Task Force Makes Recommendations

On February 20, 1979, the Florida Task Force on Educational Assessment Programs submitted Part I of its report in an effort to comply with the charge of the Florida Board of Education. (This Task Force was appointed by Commissioner of Education Ralph Turlington as requested by the Cabinet.) In this report, entitled, Competency Testing in Florida Report To The Cabinet--Part I, the Task Force made the following recommendations: (The recommendations are paraphrased, they were toned down considerably in the original document.)

1. ELIMINATING UNFAIRNESS AND MISCOMMUNICATION
   a. Postponement of the use of test scores for one year until 1980.
   b. Administration of the test to successful adults on an annual basis with the results being used to set passing standards.
   c. Administer the test for the first time in the tenth grade to allow more time for remediation. Implement in the 1979-80 school year and discontinue the Basic Skills Tests in the eleventh grade.
   d. Change the name of the State Assessment Test, Part II (Functional Literacy Test) to Florida State High School Competency Test effective immediately.
   e. Insure that prospective employers and the public do not confuse the Certificate of Completion with special diplomas which are awarded to exceptional students.
   f. Continue to use the procedures that were used to remove cultural bias from the current Florida competency tests.
   g. Review existing security and administration procedures and take steps to insure that county school officials follow the established procedures.
   h. Use caution in drawing any conclusions about comparisons between 1977 and 1978 Functional Literacy Test results before complete analyses have been made.

2. PROMOTING EARLY LEARNING AND TESTING OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MATHEMATICS SKILLS
   a. Launch a five-year coordinated, statewide research and development effort to upgrade the teaching of fundamental communications and mathematics skills in kindergarten through sixth grade in 1979.
   b. Adjust the present basic-skills testing program in the following ways:

(1) Administer statewide diagnostic tests of reading, writing, and mathematics in the second and fourth grades.
(2) Administer the Primary Competency Test, a test based on State standards for reading, writing, and mathematics skills, at the end of the sixth grade.
(3) Give students failing the Primary Competency Test at the end of the sixth grade remedial instruction and additional opportunities to pass the test in seventh and eighth grades.
(4) Deny students who have not passed the reading and writing parts of the Primary Competency Test by the end of the eighth grade promotion to the ninth grade. Those failing the mathematics part of the test should be promoted but remain in special remedial mathematics courses until the skills are acquired.

3. CONTENT AND FORM OF THE "FLORIDA STATE HIGH SCHOOL COMPETENCY TEST" (FUNCTIONAL LITERACY TEST)
   a. Broaden the focus of the High School Competency Test to include areas other than basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills. (This will be necessary since the implementation of early learning and testing of basic skills will have greatly reduced the number of entering high school students who lack basic communications and mathematics skills.)
   b. Consider the feasibility of focusing the Functional Literacy Test on academic skills rather than life skills.
   c. Until our recommendations regarding early learning of basic skills are implemented, we recommend that immediate attention be given to the following:
      (1) Broaden the test to include other than multiple-choice type items. Actually require students to write a passage for the assessment of their writing skills.
      (2) Change the present procedures for validating objectives on both the communications and mathematics parts of the test. The objectives need to be improved in terms of their precision and the degree to which they sample the mathematics and communications skills that citizens are actually called upon to use in life.
      (3) The difficulty levels of the communications and mathematics tests should be assessed and probably adjusted.
      (4) Continued research needs to be done regarding the technical quality of all tests.

4. REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION IN BASIC SKILLS
   The Task Force considers the current efforts to upgrade the basic skills of students after they have failed the Functional Literacy Test to be temporary measures that should be rendered unnecessary by improved basic-skills teaching in the early grades. However, until such teaching is in effect, we recommend that the remedial program be continued and that the following steps be taken to improve its implementation.
   a. The State Department of Education (SDE) must take a more active role in monitoring the quality of county remedial programs. Every county should be visited by SDE representatives at least once a year.
   b. Steps need to be taken to insure that other important school programs are not damaged as a result of a county's efforts in remediation.
   c. The SDE should facilitate cooperative efforts among counties to build and implement effective remedial programs. This could possibly include a clearinghouse for collecting and evaluating existing instructional techniques and materials that effectively teach basic skills and for disseminating effective products and ideas statewide. (Florida Task Force on Educational Assessment Programs, 1979, pp. 1-3.)

The Miami Herald reacted to the Task Force's proposal to temporarily suspend the requirement that students must pass the State Student Assessment Test, Part II (formerly the Functional Literacy Test) in order to receive a standard high school diploma. The one-year suspension would be an effort "to prevent unfairness to present twelfth graders." The Miami Herald reported in this editorial that the proposal to delay the test mars an otherwise constructive report and stated:

> The recommendation for a delay is based on political considerations, not educational criteria. And those same political factors will be present next year and the year after, pressing once again for delay.... The task force's report speaks of "preventing unfairness." It obviously hopes to elicit sympathy for the pupils who will be denied a diploma after 12 years of social promotion through the educational system .... No doubt there is a potential for unfairness. But the ultimate unfairness would be for the educational system to continue sending forth graduates who are unprepared to cope with society as it is today. The testing program has had a

> dramatic and beneficial effect. It has made the public aware of educational problems. It has led to remedial programs. It has stimulated student effort that has resulted in improved scores by pupils who have been retested. Is all that "unfairness?" In preparing its report, the task force failed to consider the dramatic improvement in the 1978 test scores compared with those in 1977. It also neglected the improvement shown by retested pupils.... Therefore, the cabinet--which is aware of the 1978 test results--should accept the task force's report with thanks. But it should reject the recommendation for a delay in making functional literacy a requirement for a high school diploma ("Politics Shouldn't Postpone Literacy Testing in Florida," 1979).

Part I of the Task Force's study focused on general problems and an analysis of the events through October of 1978. Part II of their study was intended to analyze the results of the testing done in October of 1978 (Florida Task Force on Educational Assessment Programs, 1979, p. viii). However, the Task Force was deactivated prior to implementing Part II.

Functional Literacy Test Requirement Suspended in U.S. District Court

The suit against the Functional Literacy Test went to trial in Federal Court in Tampa on April 30, 1979. This case, commonly referred to as the "Debra P. Case." was filed on October 16, 1978. The Plaintiffs in this action presented a broad based constitutional and statutory challenge to the Florida Functional Literacy Examination (SSAT-II). Plaintiffs contended that the SSAT-II violated their Fourteenth Amendment due process and equal protection rights as well as their rights pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2000d and 20 U.S.C § 1703.

Essentially the Plaintiffs made three claims against the Defendants who included numerous State officials and Hillsborough County officials. The first claim asserted that the Defendants either designed or implemented a test or testing program which was

racially biased and/or violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, and 20 U.S.C. § 1703. The second claim contended that Defendants instituted a program of awarding diplomas without providing the Plaintiffs with adequate notice of the requirements or adequate time to prepare for the required examination in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The third claim asserted that the Defendants used the SSAT-II in conjunction with Florida Sta. § 236.088 as a mechanism for resegregating the Florida public schools through the use of remedial classes for those students failing the examination in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, and 20 U.S.C. § 1703.

The Plaintiffs requested an injunction restraining the Defendants from requiring SSAT-II passage as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma. Additionally, they sought an injunction to both purge their scholastic records of any acknowledgement of the SSAT-II failure and to issue an Order prohibiting the utilization of the SSAT-II results as a means of structuring classes in remediation.

The Court analyzed the SSAT-II using the definition provided by the state in conjunction with the 24 objectives. A final definition promulgated by the Department of Education (DOE) on February 18, 1977 stated: "Functional literacy is the satisfactory application of basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, to problems and tasks of a practical nature as encountered in everyday life" (Carr, 1979, p. 23).

Some pertinent statements made by the Court about the SSAT-II (Carr, 1979) were:

1. The domain of the Florida test does not equate with every definition of functional literacy or for that matter with many definitions; however, it does match the one given by the DOE and the State Board of Education.
2. Skill objectives of the Florida test were adequately evaluated by the test items and the test has adequate content validity.
3. A construct is always capable of definition and the measure of a test's construct validity is whether the hypotheses made about the defined construct will predict behavior. In the instant case, the Court is satisfied that the Florida test has adequate construct validity.
4. The functional literacy test bears a rational relation to a valid state interest and thus is constitutional.
5. The test nor any of its items should be invalidated for reasons related to racial or ethnic bias based on the evidence presented by the Plaintiffs.
6. The decision to apply the SSAT-II only to public schools (not private schools) over which the state already had significant curricular, instructional, and financial control was both reasonable and constitutional.
7. The present program of instruction in specific basic skills and functional applications with periodic testing to identify both mastery and deficiencies is a step forward. It sets objectives, defines goals, evaluates

achievement and, if necessary, remediates deficiencies.

8. The Plaintiffs have a property right in graduation from high school with a standard diploma if they have fulfilled the present requirements for graduation exclusive of the SSAT-II requirement.

9. The SSAT-II requirement should be excluded for the same reasons that the notice of the test has been shown to be inadequate.

10. The Plaintiffs have a liberty interest in being free of the adverse stigma associated with the certificate of completion.

11. The inadequacy of the notice provided prior to the invocation of the diploma sanction, the objectives, and the test is a violation of the due process clause.

12. The expert testimony upon which the Court relied indicated that 4 to 6 years should intervene between the announcement of the objectives and the implementation of the diploma sanction.

13. The Plaintiffs have been victims of segregation, social promotion and various other educational ills but have persisted and remained in school and should not now, at this late date, be denied diplomas they have earned by mastery of the basic skills and completion of the minimum number of academic credits.

14. The test is valid and reliable, at least for the purpose of identifying certain skill deficiencies; however, the test perpetuates the effects of past purposeful discrimination.

15. By the end of the Court's injunction, all students should be ready and able to compete on an equal footing. Thus while the diploma sanction punishes those who suffered under segregation, the compensatory education program assists them.

16. There has been neither a constitutional nor a statutory violation because of the utilization of the results of SSAT-II as a mechanism for remediation even if the compensatory education classrooms are disproportionately black.

17. The injunctive relief granted will be of a limited duration, only that time necessary to purge the taint of past segregation and inadequate notice. At the end of the injunctive period, the state will be permitted to pursue its educational policies and goals free of intervention (Carr, 1979.)

The final statement of the U. S. District Court Judge George C. Carr stated:

> In light of the evidence relating to the necessary period of time to orient the students and teachers to the new functional literacy objectives, to insure instruction in the objectives, and to eliminate the taint on educational development which accompanied segregation, the Court is of the opinion that the State should be enjoined from requiring passage of the SSAT-II as a requirement for graduation for a period of four (4) years. In the school term 1982-1983, the State will be permitted to utilize the SSAT-II as a requirement for graduation. In the interim the SSAT-II can be administered as directed by the State DOE to assist in the identification and remediation of the SSAT-II skill objectives. The State Defendants will be permitted to retain the SSAT-II scores in a fashion consistent with the manner in which the state retains other achievement test scores.

> The Court is of the opinion that the present remediation program is not constitutionally or statutorily invalid. The progress of students out of the program and the limited duration of the daily instruction comports with applicable standards (Carr, 1979, pp. 47-48).

The State of Florida has asked the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans to overturn Judge Carr's ruling from the U.S. District Court. However, it is unlikely that any new ruling would be obtainable until nearly 1982 ("Appeal the Literacy-Test Ruling," July 18, 1979).

Summary

Utilization of the Student Assessment Test, Parts I and II, formerly referred to as the Basic Skills Tests and the Functional Literacy Test respectively, cannot readily be summarized. This situation is due to the fact that this whole body of knowledge is changing on a regular basis. One thing it appears safe to say is that this assessment program has had an impact on the Nation and in particular the State of Florida, regardless of whether or not it is a passing trend or a movement which is here to stay.

The SSAT-II appears to be the tip of the iceberg in the arena of minimum competency testing in Florida. This Spring, 1930 a minimum competency test for teachers, covering 23 generic competencies, is being piloted throughout the State. In addition, competency tests are being planned which will eventually be used to determine who should be allowed to enroll in Florida's universities.

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